

Strategic Transport Forum 15th September 2017

Agenda Item 8: Sub-national Transport Body – Moving Forward

Recommendation: It is recommended that the Forum:

- a) Consider and agree (subject to amendments agreed by the meeting) the next steps as set out in Section 6.
- b) Commission the programme team to prepare a revised and updated Terms of Reference to the Forum's December meeting.
- c) Note that work to develop a three-year business plan is underway in partnership with the Department for Transport.

1. Purpose

- 1.1. An initial engagement with potential partners and interested stakeholders has been underway over the course of the summer. This report provides feedback on that initial engagement and sets out a proposed course of action for consideration: there will be a verbal update to the Forum at the meeting.

2. Overview of Approach

- 2.1. The Forum at its meeting on 28th June considered the initial advice commissioned from advisors Bircham Dyson Bell in respect of the options associated with the development of a proposal to establish a Sub-national Transport Body.
- 2.2. The Forum resolved to undertake an initial engagement with potential partners and interested stakeholders. The purpose of this was two-fold: firstly it was seen as presenting an opportunity to set out and discuss the potential benefits, roles and responsibilities of a Sub-national Transport Body. Secondly it presented an opportunity to seek views on the proposed approach for developing the proposal to establish a Sub-national Transport Body, and in particular issues that need to be taken into account in reviewing and updating the Forum's Terms of Reference.
- 2.3. As agreed at the previous Forum meeting, the approach to the initial engagement included:
 - Distribution of engagement materials direct to members of the Strategic Transport Forum, with bi-lateral meetings with representatives from local transport authorities and local enterprise partnerships
 - Distributing the engagement materials direct to adjoining Local Transport Authorities, and invitation to participate in a workshop
 - Distributing the engagement materials direct to local planning authorities across the Heartland, and invitation to participate in a workshop
 - Making the engagement material available on the Heartland's [website](#), and the use of social media to promote the engagement

- 2.4. As work to develop the Sub-national Transport Body proposal moves forward there will be an on-going need to engage with potential partners and interested stakeholders. This will, by necessity of the legislative framework for a Sub-national Transport Body, need to be more extensive than the current initial engagement.

3. Strategic Context

- 3.1. The added value of a single voice on strategic transport issues was highlighted in the National Infrastructure Commission's Interim Report (November 2016).
- 3.2. In July the Department for Transport published its [Transport Investment Strategy](#). This document is significant in three ways:
- For the first time there was explicit recognition in a national policy document of England's Economic Heartland as an emerging Sub-national Transport Body, sitting alongside Transport for the North and Midlands Connect.
 - The importance placed on the emerging Sub-national Transport Bodies as providing a single voice on matters of genuine strategic significance and the value attached to that by the Department for Transport.
 - The role of emerging Sub-national Transport Bodies in shaping national investment programmes, including their role in determining the allocation of monies from the National Roads Fund (to be established in 2020/21).
- 3.3. Within this context the Forum's work programme is particularly important in ensuring the Heartland's requirements are better reflected in the national investment programmes for both the rail and the strategic road networks.

4. Linkage with Wider Cross Corridor Initiatives

- 4.1. An added benefit of the Forum's 'two-step' approach to taking work forward on the Sub-national Transport Body is that it will enable work on the revised Terms of Reference to move forward alongside work to develop proposals for wider cross corridor governance. Ensuring a strong and effective linkage with the wider cross corridor is essential given the inter-relationship between strategic transport, economic and spatial planning.
- 4.2. Working arrangements have been put in place to ensure that the linkages required are made. In addition to this, arrangements are in place to provide better visibility of the Forum's work and its forward programme.

5. Emerging Themes from the Initial Engagement

- 5.1. In terms of overarching key messages:
- The Forum's two-stage approach was welcomed – the proposal to review and update the Terms of Reference (including membership of the Forum) as a first stage and then using the updated Forum to develop the specific proposal was viewed as a real positive.
 - The discussion prompted by the initial engagement was seen by stakeholders as helpful in helping a wider audience understand both the Forum's role and the potential of a Sub-national Transport Body.
 - The added value of having a single voice on strategic issues within Government was seen as being important in ensuring the importance of investing in infrastructure in support of enabling delivery of planned growth (both economic and housing).

- The strong linkage between strategic transport infrastructure and digital infrastructure – what might be called the ‘connectivity’ agenda – was seen as something that needed to be developed further.
- 5.2. In agreeing to undertake an initial round of engagement the Forum had identified it as the opportunity to consider a number of specific issues, including:
- How the linkages with local planning authorities might be strengthened.
 - How the linkages with public transport operators (both rail and road) might be strengthened.
 - How the linkages with groups representing users (both individuals and businesses) might be strengthened.
- 5.3. Based on discussions and responses received so far, some of the common themes that the Forum needs to consider in updating the Terms of Reference are as follows:
- Including a representative from ‘growth boards’ across the wider corridor to be a member of the Forum would help strengthen the linkages with local planning authorities. The current Terms of Reference for the Forum allow for a representative from the Oxfordshire Growth Board, in addition to Oxfordshire County Council as the Local Transport Authority – extending this approach to other growth boards would seem appropriate.
 - Whilst the linkage with public transport operators needs to be strengthened this may be better achieved by targeting engagement on specific issues or topics that are directly relevant to the operator.
 - Discussions with Transport Focus are on-going to see how their experience and knowledge in relation to the user perspective might inform the work of a revised Strategic Transport Forum/Sub-national Transport Body. This particular issue is of interest to all the emerging Sub-national Transport Bodies and will be discussed further at an upcoming meeting of all the emerging STBs.
- 5.4. Discussions with adjoining local transport authorities are on-going: the meeting will receive a verbal update on those discussions.
- 5.5. By their very nature the expectation of the Department for Transport is that Sub-national Transport Bodies will operate at a scale that reflects their strategic role. In addition to Transport for the North, Midlands Connect and England’s Economic Heartland, progress is being made with Transport for the South East (which covers the area from Berkshire to Kent).

6. Next Steps

- 6.1. The results of the initial engagement have been positive. They endorse the Forum’s intended approach: the two-step approach - the updating of the Forum’s Terms of Reference, with the updated Forum then driving forward the work on the overarching Transport Strategy and the development of the Sub-national Transport Body proposal.
- 6.2. It is proposed that the work to review and update the Terms of Reference is taken forward over the autumn, taking into account the issues raised through the initial engagement. As previously noted, this timescale also provides the opportunity to ensure that the work is taken forward alongside that on the wider cross-corridor initiatives.

- 6.3. This would allow the Forum to consider the revised and updated Terms of Reference at its December meeting, and subject to the outcome of that meeting, enable the Forum to meet under the new Terms of Reference in January 2018.

7. Financial Implications/Resources

- 7.1. The Forum will be aware that the work programme for the current year (2017/18) is funded through a combination of contributions (both financial and in-kind) from local partners and monies from the Department for Transport.
- 7.2. The 2017/18 work programme has begun to put in place some of the foundations on which the Forum will be able to develop the overarching Transport Strategy. In addition it has enabled the core programme team to ensure that the Forum has an effective voice nationally.
- 7.3. In developing the work programme for 2018/19 and beyond it is clear that the scale of work required in many ways reflects the national significance of the Heartland area to the long-term success of the UK economy – a point made forcibly by the National Infrastructure Commission in their Interim Report last year.
- 7.4. A 3-year business plan for 2018/19 and beyond is being prepared. This will be presented to the Forum meeting in December for its consideration. At the same time discussions are beginning with Department for Transport officials with a view to securing the funding that will enable the Forum's role as an emerging Sub-national Transport Body to be taken forward.
- 7.5. A key message underpinning the business plan is the need to build upon and maintain momentum with work on strategic transport and connectivity issues in order to enable the acceleration of planned growth (economic and housing): continued Government investment in developing the capacity and capability at the strategic level will be a key part of delivering that objective.

Martin Tugwell
Programme Director

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